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THE HEART OF A WOOD-PILE.

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The pity of it is that when you make a new find and are inwardly executing a war-dance, leaping and whooping with triumph, so often Nature conspires to produce on all sides of you the very rarity you are pirouetting over, till your prize is cheap to nastiness. I remember so well the first few spikes of the Adder's Tongue Fern that I found; what miles and miles, what months and months of search with never a sign; but as soon as the secret postern-gate had been surprised, Nature seemed in a pet to withdraw every guard and unmask her positions, so that Adder's Tongue fairly bristled about my path from that day on. The same thing happened with the famous Moonwort from the hour that I found one solitary plant on the top of the Grampians near Killin. And I could cap these experiences with a score of others, *faunal* as well as *floral*.

Last year (1916) on June 29th, I discovered on a leaf of wild grape-vine a tiny, light-grey longicorn covered with round black spots. I had never seen it before, though I recognized its kinship with the few other *Lamiinids* I had surprised at rare intervals. For an hour or more I hunted vainly over grape-foliage, and at last to my delight captured a second specimen. I was in Trenton, Ont. a few days later, and spent most of my time searching over vine leaves; a third specimen thus captured threw me into ecstasies, and when finally a fourth suddenly settled on my thumb-knuckle as I approached a grape-vine, I was in the seventh heaven. The next two days from dawn to dusk were passed in feverish search over hundreds of vines, but all to no purpose.

However, an old dog, you may have observed, will be checked or thrown off the scent a hundred times for once that it's absolutely baffled. On July 6th, having returned to Peterborough, I

determined to give the grape-vines one more scouring, before I gave up my quest as a bad job. I had three rich collecting-grounds that season, of recent windfalls that I was keeping close tab on; but one day, I thought, of the glorious July heat might go in a last effort at these *Lamiinids* even if it did prove a wild-goose chase.

Recalling that I had seen some luxuriant thickets of vine west of Jackson's Park, I made my way out to the place and spent over two hours working slowly round the sides of a clover field whose fences were festooned with the wild grape. For about 10 days within the last week of June and the first week of July, grape-vine is one of the glories of the wayside; its leaves among the most beautiful in all Nature, the tender, slightly bronzed growing shoots, the delicate tendrils, and the flood of perfume wafted from its racemes, fairly capture the senses as nothing else can. All this I revelled in, but of Longhorns, big or little, not a trace could I see.

It was after 4 o'clock when I slung myself over the fence for a short cut down the river valley in the direction of home. By the fence, near where a heap of old rails and some brush had lain, I saw two newly stacked piles of fresh-cut billets of wood. They were short cylinders of cordwood with the bark still on, ranging in diameter from 3 or 4 inches to 7 or 8. My way from the fence led between the two stacks, and as I rounded the corner of the pile on my left, I spied on the top layer one of these little grey *Lamiinids* moving rapidly along the surface of one of the billets. "Moving" sounds tame, but I use the word advisedly: the insect's progress had the speed of running, but the manner of crawling; the creature is flat, not convex, and lies almost as close on the surface it is moving over as those peculiar, flat, crab-like scorpions or wood-spiders found on stumps and under bark.

It was a piece of birch that the insect was crawling on, and casting a hasty glance around, I noticed that the wood-pile on my right was almost entirely birch, while that on my left—except for a sprinkling of birch at the corner—was poplar. However, when I came to look over the birch pile more closely, I could find nothing on it; so I turned once more to the rival stack, and almost im-

mediately spied another specimen, this time on a poplar billet; then I found 2 more, and by the time I had made the round of the pile I had captured 10; before I returned home I had taken 29 specimens, all from the top layer of billets.

Generally the insects kept perfectly still and submitted to capture rather than allow themselves to be disturbed, simply crouching as flat as they could lie in the form where they were resting. If, however, they decided, like a startled hare, to make a sudden dash for it, they very rarely released their hold at the edge of a billet. Occasionally one's attempt to pinch them up from the billet between finger and thumb was a failure; and usually if you thought to drop them into the killing-bottle by simply opening finger and thumb, they declined to humour you, but would run rapidly up your finger in a spiral and elude pursuit. I found it best, whether using a pair of forceps or just the naked hand, to jar them quite sharply in the instant of opening the jaws that held them, so that they fell into the bottle. The insect proved to be *Hyperplatys aspersa* and apparently was emerging from the bark of the poplar; I thought at first the wood was the American aspen, but later I found the stumps from which it had been cut and they were all balsam poplar or balm-of-Gilead. I have since found the beetle very abundant on newly cut poplar of this species, and occasionally on living trees; it is also fairly abundant on staghorn sumach. No doubt the few specimens I had found on grape-vine were really waifs and strays from one of these two trees.

This being the first time I had ever seen *Hyperplatys* at home (so to say), I determined to take all I could get in case the find should prove a lucky haul unlikely to recur. On the 9th and 11th, I secured 22 and 33 specimens respectively; and it was on this latter date that I tried turning over every billet in the 2nd and 3rd layers as well as the top. Had the result been merely to increase the total of captures, the experiment would not have been worth repeating. But on taking a billet from the 3rd layer, I discovered nestling snugly up against one of the blackened furrows in the area of a branch-axil, a dusky grey insect that at first I took for a crouching spider. So well had it chosen its station, that but for a certain symmetry about the little patch of grey and

black that it made there, I should never have detected it; as it was, my eye was arrested by a sense of design, and, focusing on the patch, at once unmasked the live insect; a moment more, and the longicorn was betrayed by its antennæ; these were thrown back over the creature's body and lowered almost to the space between its elytra and the up-gathered legs, in an attitude I soon came to know as entirely characteristic.

The insect was about the size of *Graphisurus fasciatus* or *Hoplosia nubila*, robust and somewhat convex, but tapering towards the tip (being both narrowed at the sides and declivous above); it reminded me considerably of *Leptostylus sex-guttatus*, but was larger and quite strongly armed at the sides of the thorax; when tested by LeConte and Horn, but for one important point, it seemed to be undoubtedly *Liopus*; and in that genus it could only be *variegatus*, for all the other species were too small. None of the authorities described my form of the insect in detail, though reference was made to a variety *obscurus* which seemed to correspond; I had some specimens in my cabinet from New Jersey and New York labeled *L. variegatus*, and they were all yellowish-brown mottled, while mine was grey-black mottled; but what troubled me most was the point in LeConte and Horn: *Liopus* should have no trace of ciliate hairs beneath the antennæ, and this beetle—especially on the 3rd joint—showed a fringe of from 3 to 6 hairs. On examining my specimens from New Jersey I found them without trace of ciliæ, but on the New York specimens I found one or two such hairs. I have captured nearly a dozen since then, and all show traces of ciliæ, some quite as strongly as *Hyperplatys*, nor can I place my insect in any other genus. I, therefore, infer that the rule-of-thumb distinction between ciliate and non-ciliate genera does not apply to the *fauna* of our northerly latitudes*.

I was so much encouraged by this find that I determined in future to turn over every billet in the 3 rows that made the wood-pile. I went there the very next morning, July 12th, and proceeded to do my chore. From the top to the bottom was fully 8 layers deep and it took just about $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours to turn over every

*I find this inference corroborated by specimens of *Liopus cinereus* and *L. alpha* captured near Peterborough, F. M.

billet; I suppose I had never handled so much cordwood in my life before, but it was well worth the trouble, and I was still crying for more as greedily as Oliver Twist, when I laid down the last billet after running my eye over all the bark of its surface. My catch included 46 specimens of *Hyperplatys*, 2 of *Liopus variegatus*, and 3 of a grey-looking *Liopus* said to be a variety of *alpha* known as *cinereus*; I have since learned to associate this ashy-grey form with the poplar, and the yellow-grey form of *L. alpha* with staghorn sumach. Besides these I captured a light-grey longicorn as large as *Graphisurus*, but with very strongly clavate antennal scapes, and having (besides the lateral spines of the thorax) 4 tubercles, a pair on the thoracic disc and a pair on the elytral base. It is unquestionably *Acanthoderes*, probably *decipiens* but I am not sure; this was indeed a rich haul.

On July 10th I turned over my billets of cordwood once more, and besides seeing a great many specimens of *Hyperplatys*, captured 2 more specimens of *L. variegatus* and a single specimen of *Pogonochærus*. In making an examination of this last, I could not find it to differ in any respect from the insect I had occasionally taken on white pine; but I am told that an American authority has distinguished a form he calls *P. salicola* (*sic!*) from the normal *P. mixtus*. I suppose one may be over-sensitive about mere language, but the desire to clip words down by a syllable or two often combines very disastrously with our modern neglect of the Classics. This variety of *Pogonochærus mixtus* feeds on willow and should, of course, (as any of Macaulay's schoolboys would gladly tell you) be *salicicola*; the telescoping of the middle pair of syllables unfortunately condemns the insect to *durance vile* in a salt-mine! There is an even more terrible example of what grammarians call "solecism" in the science of botany; I recall the delicious piece of irony that even gentle Asa Gray was goaded into over this barbarism: it appears that the man who discovered a kind of holly with blossoms set on long, thread-like stalks, wishing to name and describe his find in a single breath, christened it "*Nemopanthé*" under the fond delusion that this would mean "thread-stalk blossom;" he should, however, have called it "*Nemato-pod-anthe*," and the portmanteau word that he perpetrated was too much even for the sweet-tempered father of American botany. The vein of irony is

so rare in a technical book of science that it has a surprisingly refreshing, even exhilarating effect, like the sarcastic definitions Dr. Johnson inserted in the original edition of his great dictionary.

On the 17th, I took two more *L. variegatus*; one *Pogonocherus mixtus*; a beautifully coloured *Chariessa pilosa*; a little clerid of peculiar form, the elytra being narrower at the base and slightly dilated towards the tip; and three specimens of the pretty little *Endomychus biguttatus*; besides several species of *Curculio* and *Staphylinid*. I was under stern surveillance to pack for our annual trip, to the Algonquin Park next day, but by secret calculations of a most intricate sort I proved to my own satisfaction that there was plenty of time to visit the wood-pile as well as to pack; besides, as I philosophised, the weather was far too hot for packing, and simply ideal for handling a cord or two of wood. Accordingly about 4 a.m., all unknown to Xanthippe, Socrates and the sun rose in concert over the brow of the hill and were soon absorbed in contemplation of the wood-pile.

I was somewhat embarrassed once or twice by the operations of a farmer going round and round the adjoining clover field on one of those primitive scythe-bearing machines called mowers that have presumably descended from the ancestral British war-chariots. He did not say anything, but his manner was distinctly unpleasant and spoke volumes of mingled suspicion, curiosity and contempt. To my relief, however, he appeared to decide that I was harmless and he need not interfere. This last day's experience proved both rich and varied. I took 5 specimens of *L. variegatus*; 1 *Parandra brunnea*; 1 *Saperda calcarata* (dead); 1 *Lepturges*; 1 *Leptostylus sex-guttatus*; and 1 *Acanthoderes*. In addition I saw many *Hyperplatys*, and received striking proof of "Nature red in tooth and claw," even in this peaceful, sunlit dwelling in Arcady.

My suspicions had often been roused by the number of large, black assassin-bugs in the dark recesses of the wood-pile; but the whole aspect of the place as one approached it—like Macbeth's castle to the gentle fancy of King Duncan—was peaceful and sunny; if there were no martlets flitting about it, there were butterflies galore that sailed and settled. And all the time it was the abode of murder: on the daggers of those assassin-bugs were goutts of blood. I captured one of these black marauders with a fair

specimen of *Hyperplatys* impaled on its proboscis; it had thrust the deadly stiletto through the suture of the elytra, and found the soft, defenceless body between the joints of the harness.

Nor was this all. In "The Toilers of the Sea," Hugo's famous romance of the Channel Islands, you will remember how the hero Gilliat entered the sunny sea-cavern only to find himself caught in the toils of the giant cuttle-fish. In the hollow of this wood-cave, too, lurked a monstrous Octopus. As I neared the end of the pile, I saw a huge, grey and black spider, with great hairy legs and massive obconate forepart (the thick end of the wedge being forward and a pair of glittering little eyes projecting out of the black mass) plunge out of sight between two piles of billets, and I fancied, in the flash of its dive, that it had a big blue-bottle in its jaws. I got my forceps ready and kept careful watch as I turned over the billets; and presently I drove him from cover and seized one shaggy thigh in the relentless grip of my steel vice. Cheek by jowl in my cabinet, staring stark and stiff, are set the killer and his prey, *Phidippus audax* and a last specimen of *Liopus variegatus*, for that was what the blue-bottle proved to be. The spider had not attempted to wedge his huge jaws in at the suture of the wing-covers, but had dug them in on the under side between chest and body, and sucked his victim so viciously that the ligaments between thorax and abdomen were wrenched apart and the elytra disjoined and loose.

NOTES ON BARNES' AND McDUNNOUGH'S "CHECK
LIST OF LEPIDOPTERA OF BOREAL AMERICA."

BY F. H. WOLLEY DOD (ON ACTIVE SERVICE).

(Continued from page 16.)

Cirphis Walk., *Roseola* (1937) is probably a variety of *farcta* (1938), and *calgariana* (1945) of *anteroclara* (1942). *Anteroclara* and *farcta* are too nearly allied to be separated, as here, by *imperfecta* and *insueta*. *Heterodoxa*, *dia* and *megadia* stand as varieties of *insueta*, and this is very likely correct, except that the first two named are questionably distinguishable forms. The type of *dia* in the British Museum differs in negligible detail from some Calgary *heterodoxa* in the same collection.

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